IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

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Celebrating a Century of Conservation!

March 17, 2003

Mr. David Heath
Mississippi River Fisheries Manager
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
3550 Mormon Coulee Road
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear Mr. Heath:

We received your letter of comments, dated 7 March 2002, concerning the draft Environmental Assessment for the Rosebud Island Protection Project. The following changes were made in the document based on your recommendations:

1. In **1.2 Need, first paragraph**: the loss of bathymetric diversity as a by-product of island erosion was included.

2. In **1.4 Background, last paragraph**: "southeast" was changed to "southwest."

3. The water surface elevations were added to all appropriate figures.

4. In **Chapter 2 Alternatives**, we added more detail to the following two alternatives as you suggested:

   - **Construction during winter** was an alternative not considered for detailed analysis because of safety and logistical concerns. The project location requires crossing flowing water channels where ice thickness would vary and where travel could be dangerous. An ice thickness of 36" is desired before allowing heavily loaded dump trucks to cross; the chance of finding these ice conditions in this area of Lake Onalaska in any given year is consistently low. Also, it is not contractually feasible to have a rock supplier on stand-by notice to deliver in the event that adequate ice conditions are met.

   - **Placement of nearshore structures** along sections of eroding shoreline on all three islands would be completed under this alternative. Nearshore structures include riprap or a biotechnical stabilization techniques such as rock groins, sand berms, and willows. The advantages of nearshore over offshore structures are that significantly less rock is required, which reduces costs, and that islands can be partially rebuilt using dredge material. The cost per linear foot to place rock along the shoreline is estimated at $24. In contrast, the cost to construct one linear foot of rock mound ranges from $100-120.

     The major disadvantage of using nearshore structures for this project, at least along the inner two islands, is that a significant amount of access dredging would have to be done to reach these islands. This dredging could be disruptive to vegetation beds and mussels.

Protecting nearly 850' of shoreline with nearshore structures along the inner two islands would require dredging about eight channels for access for barges loaded with equipment, material, and supplies. Each channel would be an estimated 50' long and 65' wide. This would result in the dredging of about 4,900 cubic yards of fine, sloppy material. Small amounts of dredge material could be used to rebuild shoreline; the remainder would have to be loaded onto barges and transported to an undetermined placement site.

The cost of dredging and disposal may be $73,500, assuming $15 per cubic yard. The cost to purchase and place rock along 850' of shoreline would be about $20,000 ($24 per linear foot). Based on several assumptions and unknowns, the total estimated cost of the nearshore structures on the two islands would be $94,000. Moreover, there could be additional costs for site preparation at the placement site, dredging for access to the permanent site, downtime because of limitations on equipment availability, and to cover other unknowns.

The cost of the proposed offshore mounds is estimated at $90,000 without the integrated rock/log design, or $108,000 with the rock/log design included. However, the number of unknowns and assumptions for the proposed action (Alternative A) is less than for this alternative (Alternative C). In summary, construction of the offshore structures is a more predictable procedure for this project.

5. In **2.2.1 Alternative A (Proposed Action) paragraph 5**: the explanation was added.

6. In **4.1.4 Cumulative Impacts, paragraph 5**: The location of Mosey Landing was added. There has been a change in plans for the loading/unloading of equipment and most supplies and material. It is expected that most of the material, supplies, and equipment would be loaded/unloaded at the USACE facility at Lock and Dam 7. Mosey Landing, located north of the project site off County Trunk Highway Z, may be used for loading the logs. The Town of Onalaska operates and maintains this landing through an agreement with the USACE. The Town will be contacted for their approval. If the landing is used, the loading of logs will be scheduled to minimize the amount of time the landing is blocked.

7. The concern about fish entrapment has been noted.

We appreciate receiving the comments. Please call me at 608/783-8401 if you have questions or would like to discuss this project in more detail.

Sincerely,

James M. Nissen
District Manager

cc: Don Powell, USACE